



## **Dealing with ambiguity**

### **Policy and practice among artisanal gold miners**

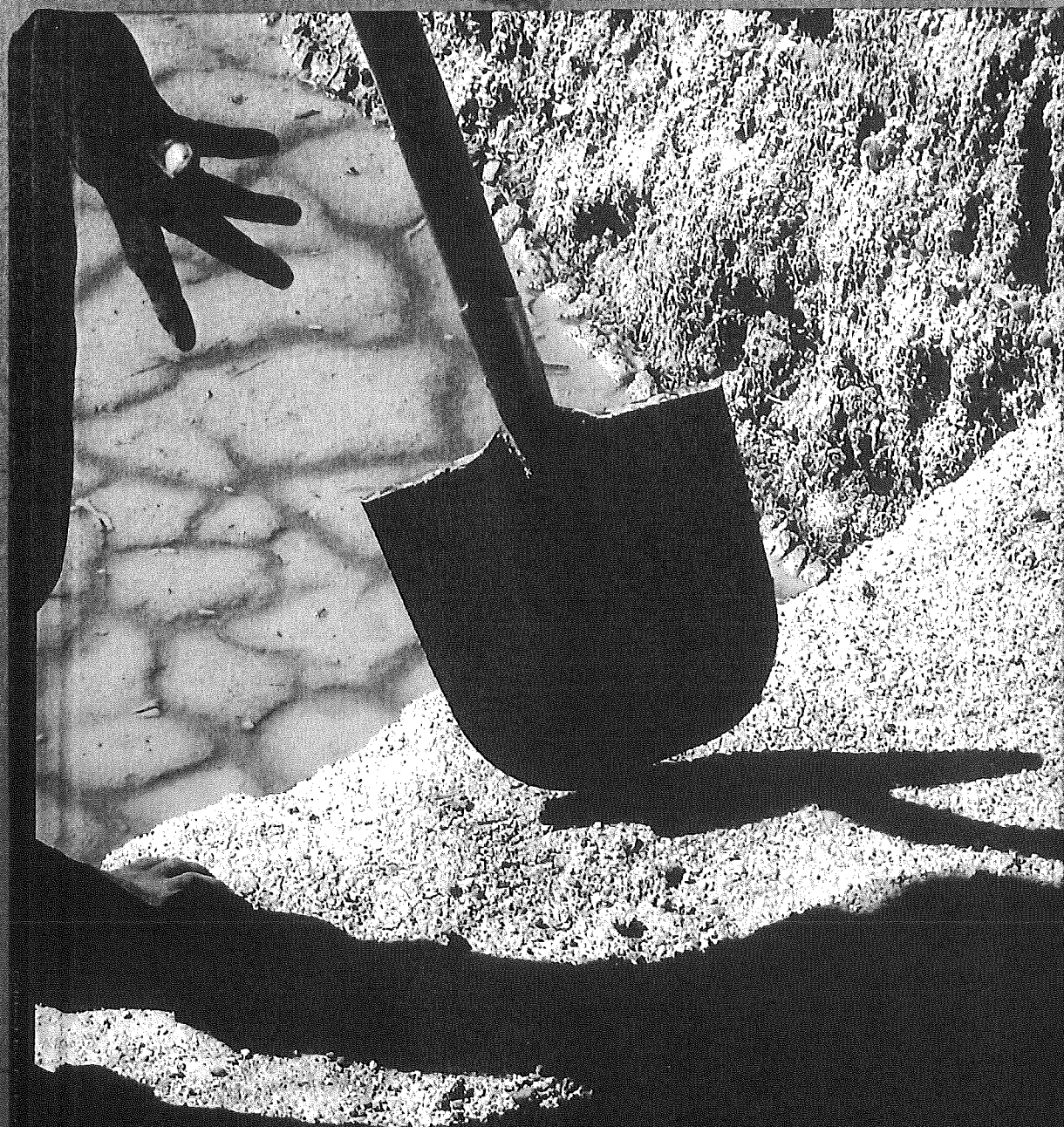
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# Mining and Social Transformation in Africa

Mineralizing and democratizing trends in artisanal production

Edited by Deborah Fahy Bryceson, Eleanor Fisher,  
Jesper Bosse Jønsson and Rosemarie Mwaipopo

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## 7 Dealing with ambiguity

### Policy and practice among artisanal gold miners

*Jesper Bosse Jønsson and Niels Fold*

In 1992, the World Bank published its Strategy for African Mining arguing that the endorsement of reformed mining codes<sup>1</sup> could transform the underperforming African mining sector into a driver of economic recovery. The new mining codes that followed in many African countries expanded the opportunities for commercial, particularly foreign, mining companies and led to substantial rises in exploration and mining investments (Campbell 2004, 2009). In addition, the existence of artisanal mining and its importance for poverty reduction have gradually been recognized, which has resulted in efforts to legalize, formalize, and regulate the sector. Funds from the World Bank were allocated to draft new artisanal mining codes in a number of African countries with the stated aim of building human and institutional capacity in order to implement the legislation and address the sector's associated problems (World Bank 1992, 2004).

In tandem with the recognition of its importance, the artisanal mining sector has received increasing attention from the international donor community (Hilson 2005, 2007). Evidence suggests, however, that the impacts of the artisanal mining support programmes have been limited, mainly due to the failure of top-down support approaches to adequately involve beneficiaries, the limited capacity within government institutions, and the lack of knowledge about artisanal miners' livelihoods (Banchirigah 2006; Hilson 2007). Hence, Hilson (2005) strongly advocates more baseline studies within artisanal mining settlements to provide information on the number, age, origin, ethnicity, and educational background of miners.

In addition there is a strong need for a better understanding of the operational activities within artisanal mining. This is necessary not only to increase the efficiency of development projects aimed at improving living and working conditions in mining settlements but also to develop and adapt the regulatory mechanisms to long-enduring practices. If basic practices differ substantially from official prescriptions of the mining codes over an extended period of time this indicates that certain elements of the regulatory framework may need to be reconsidered. Moreover, this chapter stresses the need for understanding variations of organizational practices among artisanal mining settlements, how they have evolved and consolidated, and why they may differ significantly between settlements. Only by incorporating common practices as well as variations in